

ORPHEUS DESCENDING

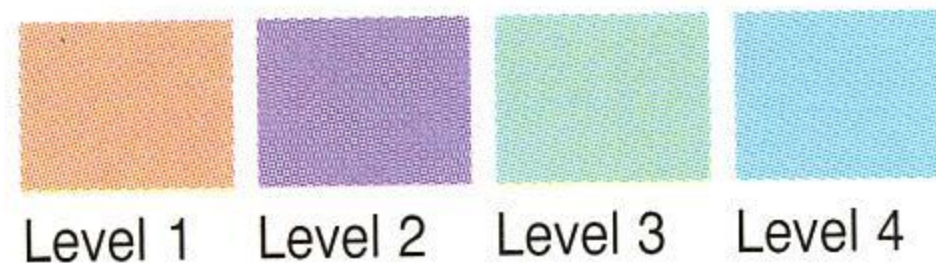
When Orpheus looked inside, he saw that he was standing in front of a river with fire burning on its surface. There was an old man there with wild white hair, standing next to a boat. He was looking down at the water, and Orpheus thought he saw the reflection of the fire in the man's eyes, but when the man turned to look at him Orpheus saw that his eyes were made of fire. Finally, he had met Charon the Ferryman.

"No money was put upon your lips on the day you were buried, so I will not take you across the River Styx."

"But I did not die. I only came here to talk to Pluton and Persephone. I want to ..."

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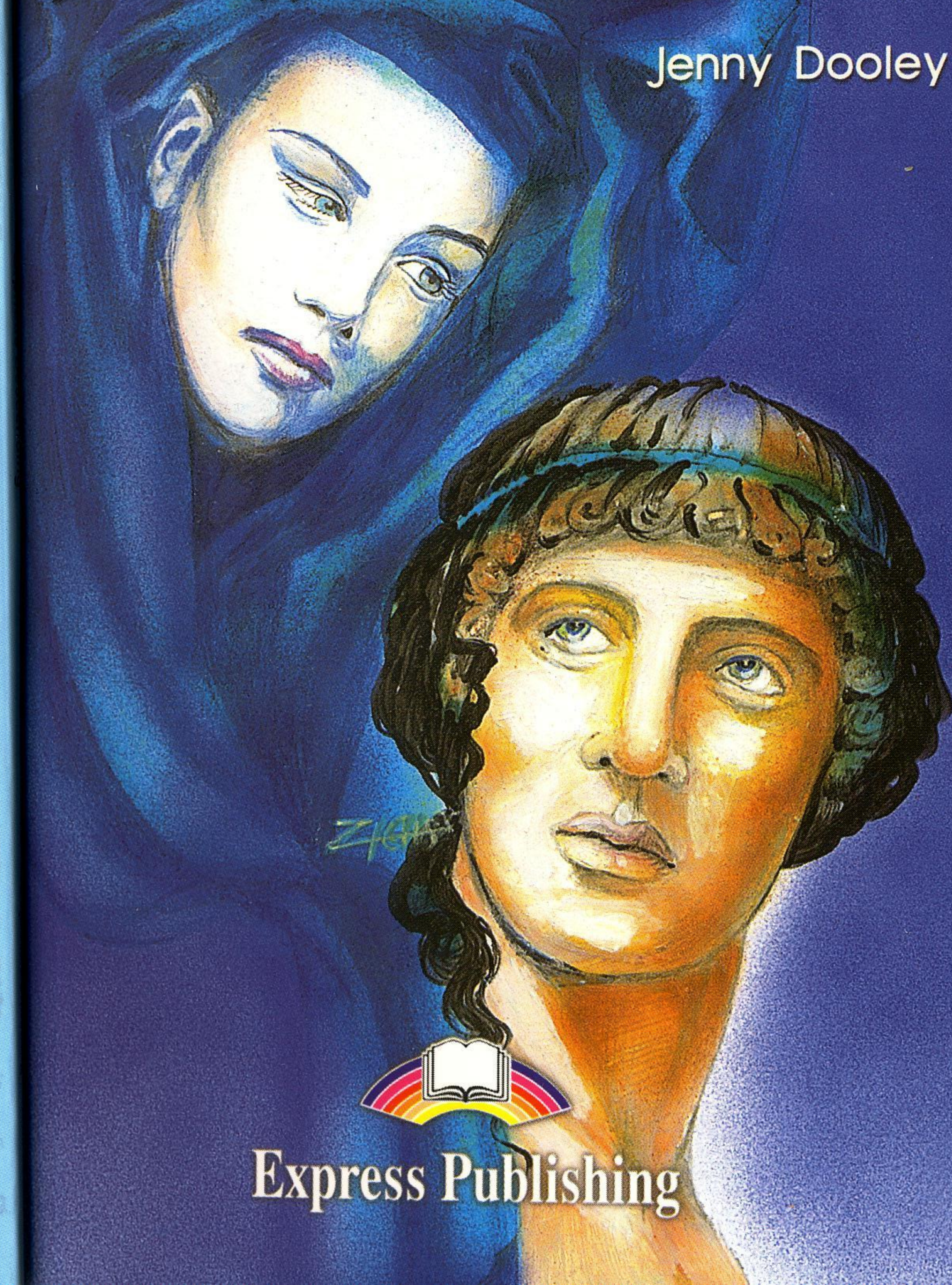
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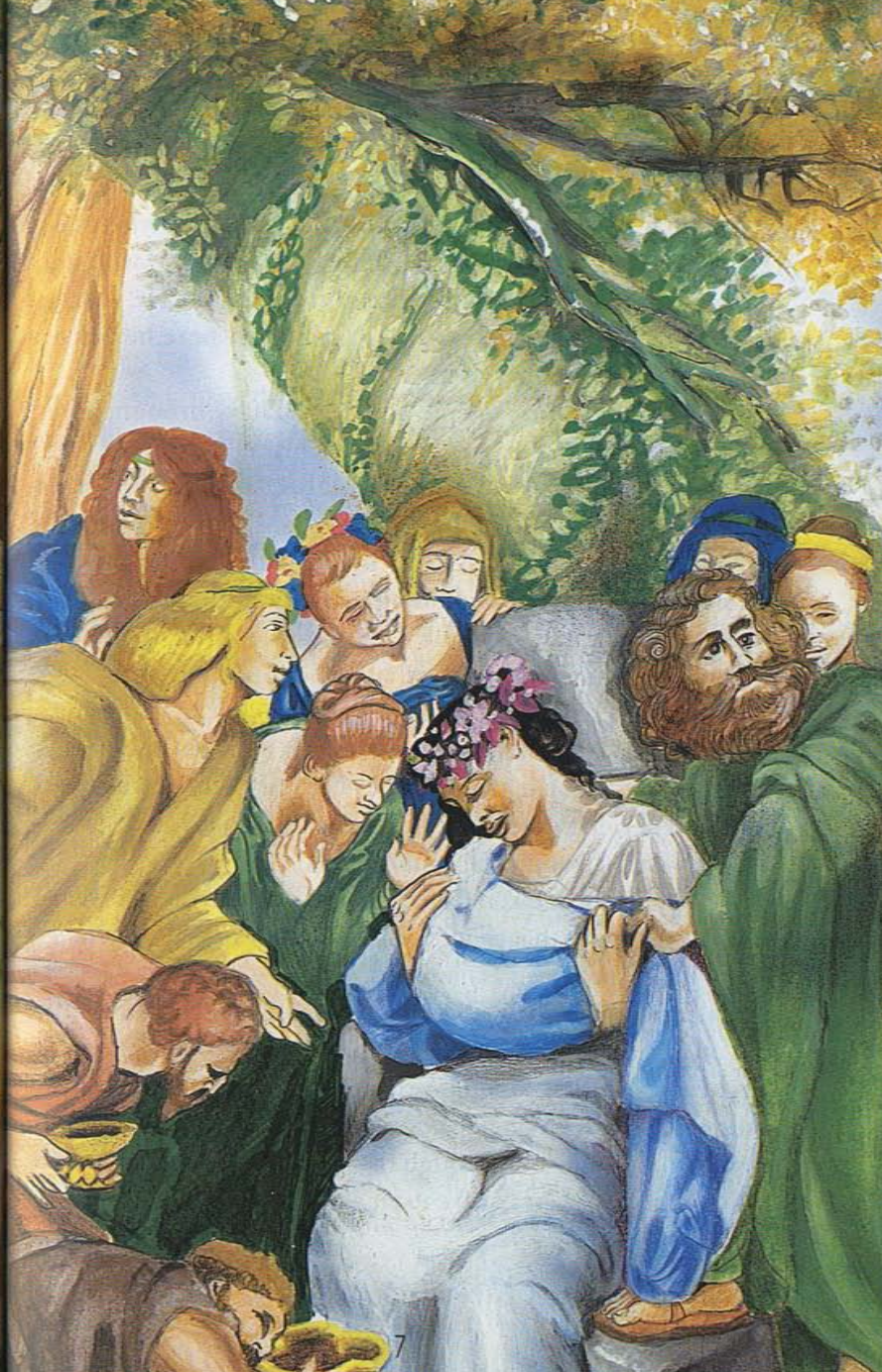
Apollo's Gift

After Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, gave birth to her first and only child, she and her husband, King Oeagus, held a celebration in honour of their newborn son. Calliope wore a violet-coloured wreath on her head and a long white robe. The only sign that her son, Orpheus, was with her was a small bundle of blue-white silk held carefully in her arms.

They were in an open area among the mountains of Thrace where everyone could sing and dance, but Calliope's high-backed stone chair was kept in the shade of the trees to protect the child from the midday sun. King Oeagus stood next to his wife while relatives and friends came and laid gifts at their feet, wishing them and their child everlasting happiness.

The other eight Muses came, each bringing a gift from the art or science they had influence over. When they had left their gifts with the others, they all sat beside Calliope and Oeagus to wait for Apollo, the god of music and light. He, of all the gods, could tell men their futures. Yet he spoke through the Muses, and they were like children to him. His arrival would be the highlight of the celebration.

A light music came through the movement of the trees' leaves. It was so light that it could hardly be heard, yet everyone heard it and stopped what they were doing. A wind began to blow and with it, the music was carried closer to people's ears. It passed through their ears and filled their bodies, making them feel that the earth below their feet and everything about



them was moving to the same beautiful rhythm.

Apollo walked from the forest into the open area where the celebration was taking place, and they saw it was he who was playing this music on a lyre he held in his hands. He walked through the crowd of people up to Calliope, where he placed the lyre at her feet.

"Calliope, my Muse of epic poetry, you have brought a son into this world with Oeagus, a man of Thrace. Because of your influence over the art of poetry, and because the Thracians are the most musical of people in Greece, I give your son the instrument which is closest to my heart. With it, he will be able to combine the poetry you have given him, with the music his father has given him, to create songs no other human on earth will be able to match. This is what will define your son.

"He will be able to go places no other man can go because of his music. He will give men strength in times of despair; heroes will be led on in their journey because of his playing; and he will experience both love and loss, and his joy and sorrow will be heard through the sound of his lyre."

"And when he is taken from this earth, he and his lyre will be placed together so that all men will be able to see and remember where music and poetry combined."

Calliope opened the silk cloth protecting the child from the sun and held his face up for Apollo to see. Apollo kissed its forehead, and that kiss passed the power to combine music and poetry into Orpheus' body. From that day forward, this power would come out through his lyre, and hold both humans and animals — even nature itself — spellbound.

HEIRON AND Jason

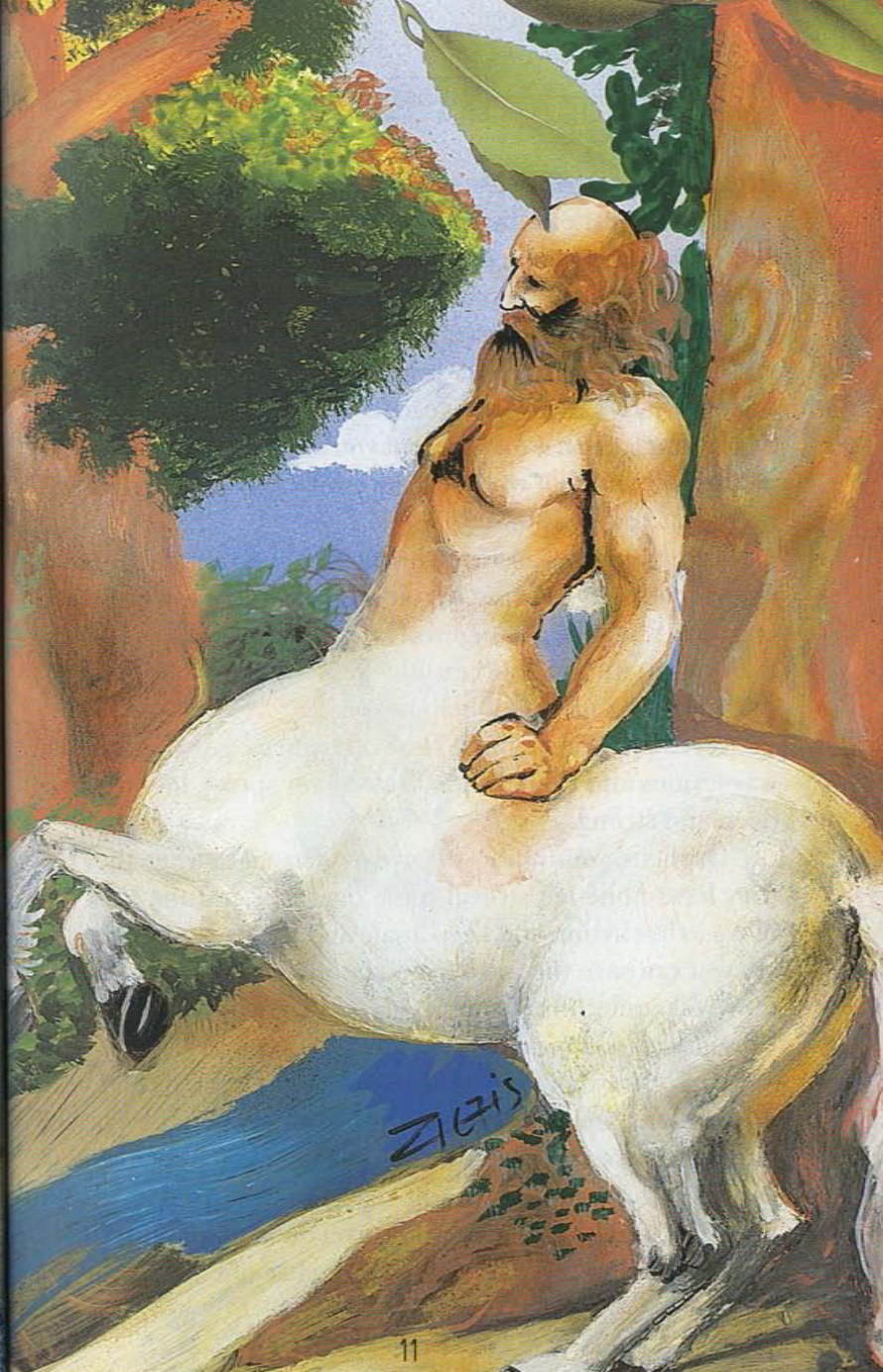
Orpheus played his lyre and sang songs every day until the time he was sixteen, and he had become the greatest musician anyone had ever heard. He liked to walk through the mountains and forests of Thrace while he played, and the trees would move slightly from side to side to the rhythm of his music. Orpheus saw many wild animals such as mountain lions, bears, foxes and deer. He would stop and play for them, and he was amazed to see that they would lie close to him, with their eyes closed, breathing softly as they listened to the peaceful sound of his music.

Although he loved playing his lyre, Orpheus felt that there was something missing from his life. He spoke of this to his father.

"I feel that there is no adventure in my life. Every day is the same. My music comes from inside me, but it is based on the experiences I have in the world. It seems time for me to leave Thrace and see things which will make me more creative."

"It is natural for a boy your age to feel such things, and you are right. You should go out and see more of this world. But you must wait for the opportunity to come. It will, but you must be patient!"

Orpheus accepted his father's advice, but it did not make it any easier for him to live with that restless feeling inside him. He returned to the fields of Thrace, playing his lyre for whoever or whatever could hear him until one day he saw something he



had never seen before. It was a strange creature. He had the head and chest of a human, but it rose from the body of a horse. Orpheus had heard of these creatures. They were called *centaurs*. Next to the centaur was a man dressed like a prince. He spoke to Orpheus first.

"Orpheus, my name is Jason, prince and future King of Iolcus. This is Cheiron, my teacher and the greatest teacher in all of Greece. He has told me that you are the greatest musician in the land and that you are a necessary part of my voyage."

"What voyage is that?"

"I am going to Colchis to bring back the Golden Fleece to my people. Only the most heroic men in Greece will be invited to go, as it will be a dangerous trip and we will need every man's strength to be successful."

"But how can I be of help to you?"

Here, Cheiron stepped closer. Orpheus saw that his face was serious and calm. When the centaur spoke, his voice was deep and strong.

"Orpheus, your music will give men strength when they feel they have none left. It will settle quarrels, and the boat will move to its rhythm and keep a safe and steady course. Most of all, you can save the Argo from almost certain destruction. A time will come when your ability to play will be challenged. This is what will make you a hero."

It was clear that this was the adventure Orpheus had been looking for. Jason, who had never heard Orpheus play, asked him to do so before the three of them left for Iolcus. Orpheus played with more enthusiasm than ever before. He felt the openness of the sea they would travel on, and he understood the powerful excitement one must feel as one begins such a

journey. Jason had tears in his eyes when Orpheus finished.

"Cheiron was right. You can do magic with that lyre of yours. Those chosen as Argonauts will no doubt be as moved as I am now."





ORPHEUS *plays for the Argonauts*

The name of Jason's boat was the Argo. It sat in the water near Iolcus with its long oars resting peacefully at its sides. This picture of calm was in direct contrast to the activity taking place on the land beside it. Men were competing in a series of games to see who would go on the journey to find the Golden Fleece. Among them were Castor, who was able to train twelve wild horses at one time, and Polydeuces, who was showing why he was the best boxer in all of Greece as he knocked out one challenger after another. Orpheus watched all of this with amazement, for he had never seen anything like it. Jason stood on a rock above him, looking down at all of the competitors. Hercules, who was also travelling on the Argo, walked past Orpheus carrying two large chests. He almost knocked him over.

"Out of the way little man. This is no place for music. Take your music and find some women to play for. This is a place for men of strength and power."

There was a brightness in Jason's eyes when he heard this.

"Have you heard him play, brave Hercules? He has more power in that lyre than I think all of these men have together."

Hercules set the chests he was carrying on the ground and stood with his arms crossed.

"Play for me then, and show me something I do not know."

Orpheus picked up his lyre. He looked at all the other

men competing to make this journey and used the reason for the journey, as the inspiration for his song.

As he began to play, the spirit of Apollo rose within him, and he produced a sound from his lyre that touched all the men's hearts. It was a high, delicate sound which made the men stop what they were doing and look up in amazement.

Orpheus sang about the story of the Golden Fleece; of how a flying ram with a golden coat, was sent by Zeus to save Phrixos from being killed by his own people. Now the Fleece was somewhere in Colchis and Pelias — the King of Iolcus — wanted Jason to bring it back to him, and restore the spirit of Phrixos to the land of Iolcus before Pelias turned the throne over to Jason.

There was no doubt this journey would be a dangerous one, and it would need the best of men in every contest of strength, intelligence and bravery. Orpheus sang that strength did not only come from the muscles of one's body, but that it could be created by one's spirit. That spirit was awakened by the sound of music and Orpheus wished to provide this music. He was the best at what he did — touched as he was by the hands of Apollo — and he wanted to be present on the Argo, to ensure that these brave men never lost the spirit necessary for a successful journey.

When Orpheus finished, there was a moment of silence, then the loud roar of cheering. Jason smiled at Hercules.

"Well, has he won your heart as well?"

Hercules picked up the chests and put them back on his shoulders.

"He can come if that's what you mean. I'm sure it'll be good for the men."

Hercules was not a man who gave compliments easily. This casual praise meant more than the words themselves. As Hercules walked away, Jason turned to Orpheus.

"You have won the hardest of hearts. You have nothing more to fear."



THE ARGO

Avoids Trouble

Orpheus soon proved how valuable he was to the Argo. After only four days of sailing, a fight broke out between Castor and Polydeuces. Polydeuces wanted Castor to take his turn rowing, but Castor insisted he had to stay on deck as the look-out.

"My eyes see further than anyone else's, and so far I've led us on a steady course."

"But the men are tired. We could use someone else to give us a break."

"It's not like boxing, is it? You can't just punch your way out of it, can you?"

Polydeuces grabbed Castor by the neck.

"You'll row with the rest of us and then you'll see what it's like to do some real work."

They began fighting and wrestling all over the deck. Not even Hercules could separate them. Then Orpheus picked up his lyre. He played what he felt, and he sang of the open sea and how its rough waves were only a mask hiding its truly calm self.

Castor and Polydeuces stopped fighting to listen to Orpheus play. When he had finished, they all went back to what they had been doing, feeling calm and strong like the sea and forgetting that they had been tired or angry.



But it was only a few days more before the Argo began to lose its course. The men who were rowing began to complain

that they never saw the sunlight as they rowed below deck during the day and then slept at night. Their complaining broke the rhythm of their rowing, which drove them further off their course and made their rowing more difficult. They took longer breaks and Jason demanded that they push on.

"We're losing time. It's dangerous to stay in these waters too long."

"But my arms feel like water themselves, sir. I don't have the strength to take another turn."

They heard the soft music of Orpheus coming from up above. Orpheus sat at the front of the Argo, playing as he looked at the sea. He noticed the waves had a rhythm of their own, and he was trying to play along with them. Soon he felt that his sounds and the waves were moving in tune with each other. The beauty of this music drifted below the deck of the boat and floated into the hearts of the Argonauts, making them take the oars in their hands with a new energy. They forgot their former tiredness, and they too, as well as the Argo, began to move in tune with the sea and the music.

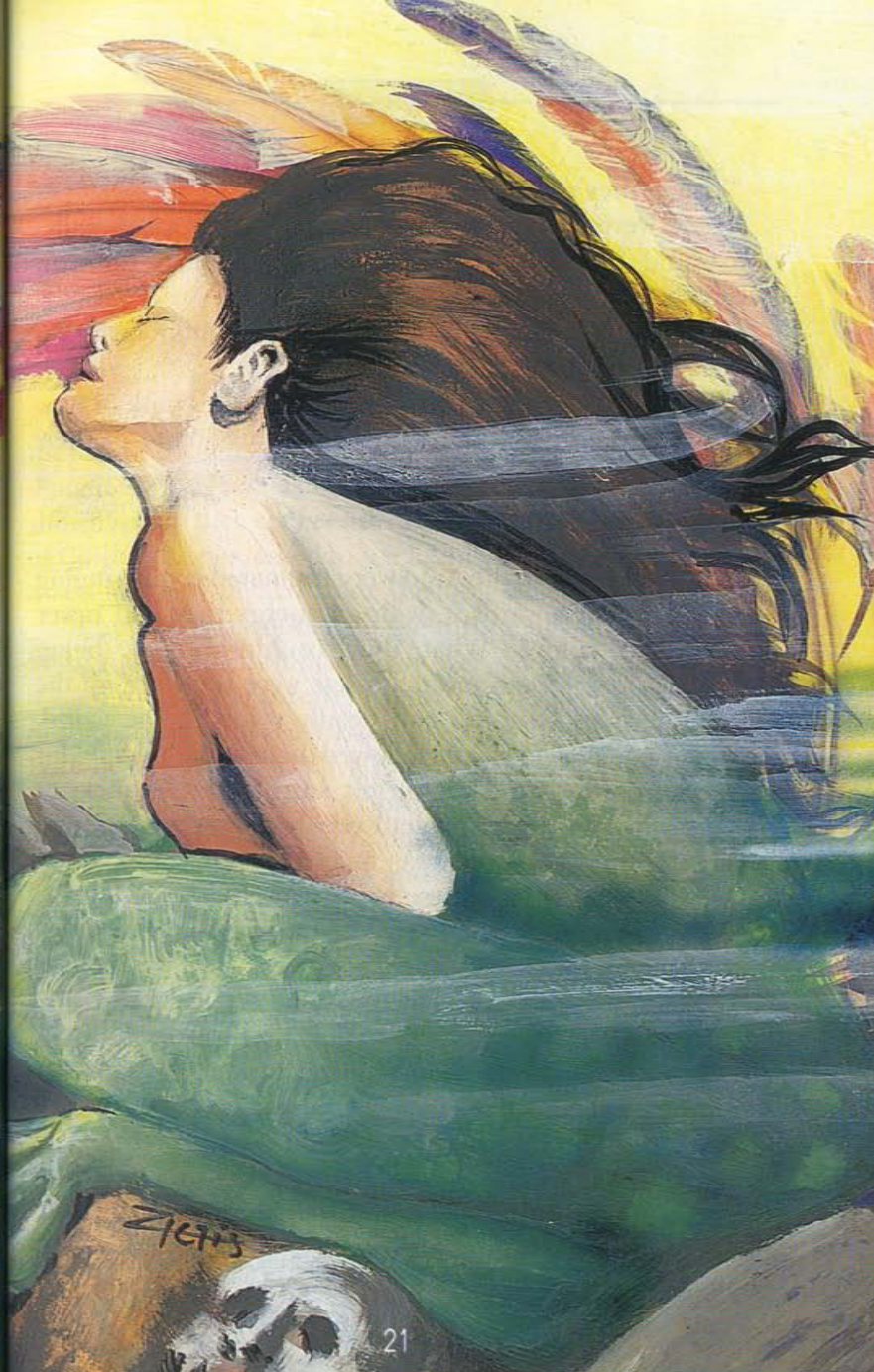


The Argo stopped each night on an island, because it was dangerous to be on the water in the dark, but one night in particular the Argonauts were having trouble while trying to find land.

A light fog began to roll across the water as the light from the setting sun left the sky. Some of the Argonauts heard women's voices. They were like whispers coming from the air around them, then they'd disappear.

"Did you hear that?"

"But there's no one around. Where are these voices coming from?"



"Listen, they're singing."

There were women's voices singing quietly. Occasionally, one would rise above the rest, letting out high notes of sweetness and joy.

"The gods themselves could not sing with more beautiful voices."

"Turn the boat. There must be land there. Think of how beautiful these women must be if that's the sound of their voices."



The entire crew of the Argo were fascinated by the singing and they rowed towards it, with an energy they had never experienced before. What they couldn't know, being completely hypnotized, was that these were the voices of the Sirens, the most beautiful and deadly voices in the world. Their voices led all men who followed them to their death, for they lived on an island completely surrounded by rocks as sharp as any sword ever made. Every boat that ever tried to get close to them and every man on board, were cut to pieces.

The fog helped hide these rocks from the Argo, but the Argonauts were so carried away by the sounds they heard that they would not have seen them in any case, until it was too late.

Orpheus was also moved by the sound of their music, and he played along so passionately that he drowned out the Sirens' voices. Instantly, the Argonauts began rowing to the sound of Orpheus's lyre, unable to distinguish it from the Sirens' song. This fortunately, led them away from the dangerous rocks. The power of the Sirens had caused Orpheus to play music which was even more powerful than theirs, and the rhythm of his song led the Argonauts safely on in their journey to Colchis.

APHRODITE and Eros

When Jason and the Argonauts finally reached Colchis, they were treated as heroes for making such a long and dangerous journey. They ate and drank well, and they were shown where they could bathe and rest in comfort. The King of Colchis, Aeetes, asked to see Jason after he had rested, and asked him why he had made the long journey to Colchis.

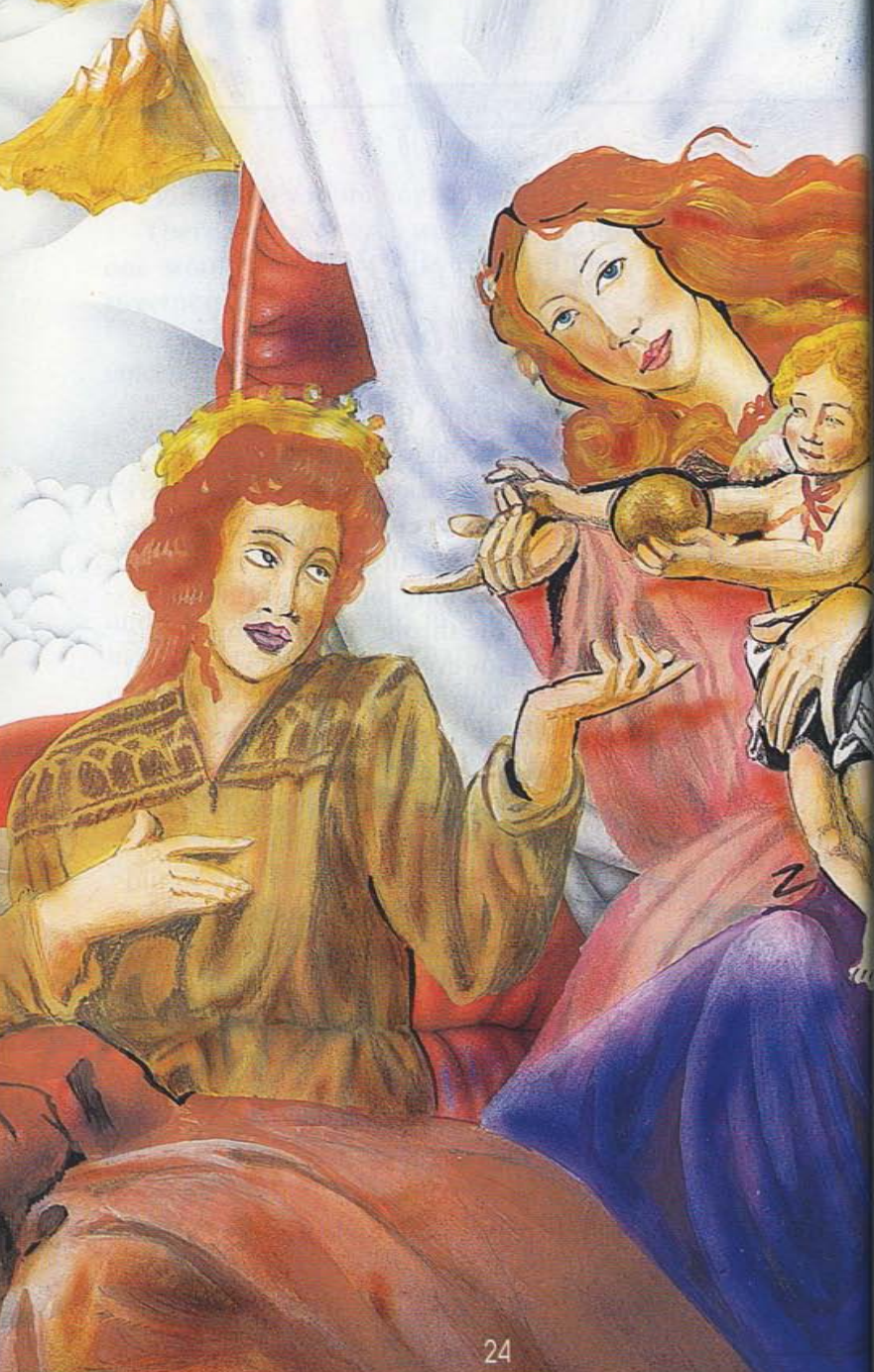
"I am the rightful heir to the throne of Iolcus, and King Pelias has accepted this fact. However, an oracle has said that if I am to take the throne, I must return the Golden Fleece to Iolcus. Our cousin Phrixos's spirit lives through the fleece. With it, our people will live in peace. If you agree to give us the Fleece, we will gladly perform any service you wish. I have men with me who can fight off all of your enemies."

Jason's request surprised and angered Aeetes. He would give no one the Golden Fleece, and if he had known that the Fleece was what the Argonauts wanted, he would have killed them in their sleep. Now he couldn't do that, so he thought of something which he was sure they could not survive.

"I understand you are brave men, having survived the journey here and it is my wish to honour you. However, in order to give you the Golden Fleece, I would need to see you accomplish something that I myself have accomplished."

"Say it and it shall be done."

"There are two wild, fire-breathing bulls who live in the fields of Ares. I once tied a plough to the necks of those bulls and ploughed those fields. In them, I planted the teeth of a



dragon and almost instantly an army of dragon-toothed men grew out of the land and attacked me. I was able to kill every one of them, and I expect you can do the same.”



Hera, who had been listening to all of this, knew that Aeetes was lying. He had never done such a thing, and it was impossible for Jason to do it without some kind of help. In the form of a bird, she flew to mount Olympus where she found Aphrodite, the goddess of love, playing with her son Eros.

“Aphrodite, I need your help. I am guiding the Argonauts in their search for the Golden Fleece and King Aeetes has asked them to do something which is impossible.”

“And what would you like me to do?”

“Aeetes has a daughter, Medea. She has special powers. If you manage to make her fall in love with Jason, I am sure she could help him succeed in what her father has asked.”

“I will ask my son, Eros, to go and visit her, as he has never failed to fill people’s hearts with love for others.”

Aphrodite took a golden ball from inside her robe and held it out to Eros.

“This is for you, my darling. But first I want you to find Medea, daughter to Aeetes, and fill her heart with love for Jason.”

Eros smiled at his mother, took the ball, then flapped his wings and rose into the air with his bow and arrow in his hands.



He was high above the scene where Jason was accepting Aeetes’s challenge. Medea was standing at her father’s side, and she did not see or feel the small arrow that Eros shot into her arm. But then, when she looked at Jason, she suddenly felt that he was the most handsome man she had ever seen.

THE BULLS and the Dragon

The Argonauts returned to the Argo to discuss who would capture the bulls and plough the fields of Ares. Castor said he could attach the plough to the bulls' heads, but Jason replied that he doubted he could defeat the army of men that would grow out of the field behind him. Then, they saw a small boat coming towards them from the shore. In it was Medea's nephew, and when he came on board, he told them why he had come.

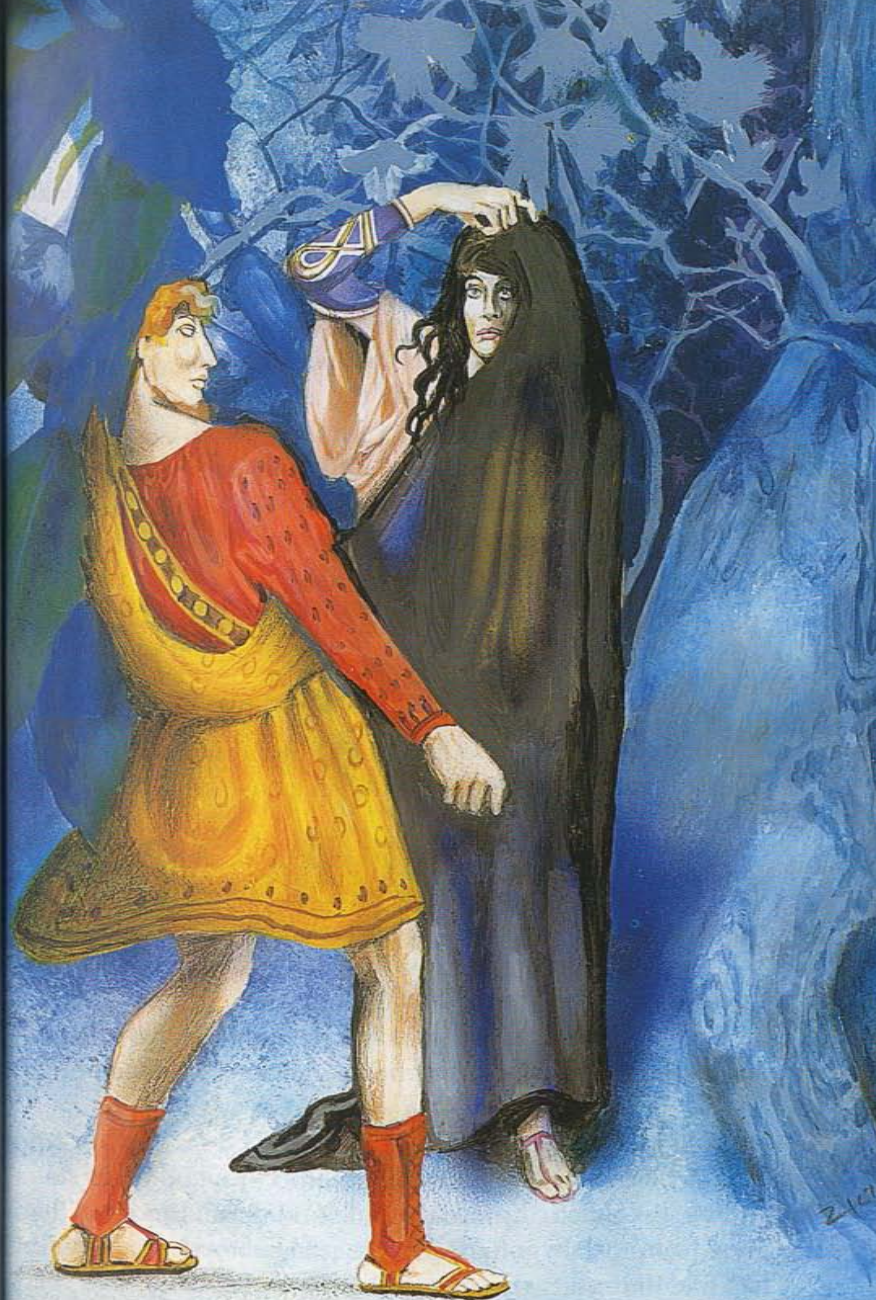
"I am the nephew of Medea, daughter of Aeetes. She has powers beyond all other men and women, and she can help you succeed in what her father has asked you to do. If you would like her help, she has told me where she will be this night, and I may take you, Jason, to talk with her."

Jason agreed, and he and the boy rowed back to shore in the small boat.



Medea was waiting for them in a clearing in the forest. She wore a black robe with a hood hiding most of her face, as she did not want to be seen going against her father's wishes. In her hands was a small box containing a magic ointment that would protect Jason from the bulls' fire and the army's spears if he rubbed it onto himself on the day of the contest. Jason spoke first when he saw her.

"Your nephew has told me you are kind enough to help me defeat the bulls of Ares and plough the fields without harm. For this, I thank you."



Jason's voice, Medea thought, equalled his good looks, and she had to keep her own voice from shaking when she answered, as she felt drawn to him.

"Here is an ointment which will protect you from all that could harm you. Rub it onto your skin well, and neither the bulls' fire nor the army's spears will be able to break your skin. And there is something else. If the army of dragon-toothed men appears to be too great in number, throw a small stone among them and they will begin attacking each other."

Jason took the box from Medea, but he couldn't help wanting to see all of her face, as he, too, felt moved by her voice and everything about her.

"May I see the face that offers such kindness to me?"

She took the hood from her head, and Jason's heart beat quickly from the beauty he saw in her.

"Medea, I know you are doing this without your father's knowledge, but I am also moved by how beautiful you are. If all goes well tomorrow, I would like to take you back to Iolcus and make you my wife."

Medea was so surprised to see that Jason shared the same feelings for her as she did for him, that she couldn't speak. Instead, Jason made one final request.

"To thank you, and in case I never get the chance again, may I kiss you before we say goodnight?"

Medea did not answer, but the moment his lips touched hers, she knew that he loved her as much as she loved him.



The next morning, Jason spread the ointment on his skin, and he was able to capture the bulls and defeat the army that grew from the dragon's teeth. He remembered what Medea had told him, and as the army started growing in number very

quickly, he threw a small stone before them and they began attacking and killing each other. King Aeetes was furious.

"You could not have done that by yourself. Someone helped you. I'll never give you the Golden Fleece now."

"You have made a mistake, King Aeetes. I did what you asked of me. If you will not honour the agreement, we will be forced to fight."

"Be gone with you. I'll listen to no more. Guards! Prepare for battle."

And so Jason and the Argonauts returned to the Argo and prepared to attack the king and his men.



Medea, hearing all of this, took her most valuable possessions and escaped from the castle to be with Jason on the Argo. She knew where the Fleece was, and she wanted to save her father's kingdom from a terrible battle even though she planned to leave with Jason.

"Jason, take me to Iolcus with you. I want to be your wife. But spare my father. I can show you where the Fleece is."

"I never meant to do your father harm. The Fleece is only for my people. You are the greatest treasure I could possibly return with."



The Fleece hung from a tree far beyond the fields of Ares, but it was guarded by a fierce dragon who never slept. Orpheus sang the dragon a song which made it fall asleep, and as the dragon lay down, gradually closing its large round eyes, Jason took the Golden Fleece from the tree.

The Argonauts left Colchis under the light of a full moon. Medea sat in Jason's arms at the front of the boat as Orpheus played his lyre and sang of all that they had been through.

EVERYONE

Orpheus returned to Thrace full of the sense of adventure his experience on the Argo had given him. The mountains and trees were now moved by a stronger and heartier rhythm, as Orpheus's songs retold all he had seen with the Argonauts.

Yet, something strange happened to him. Whenever he sang of Jason's meeting Medea, he felt sad inside. This sadness prevented him from playing as well as he could, and for a while he completely lost interest in playing at all. His mother offered one possible explanation for the way he felt.

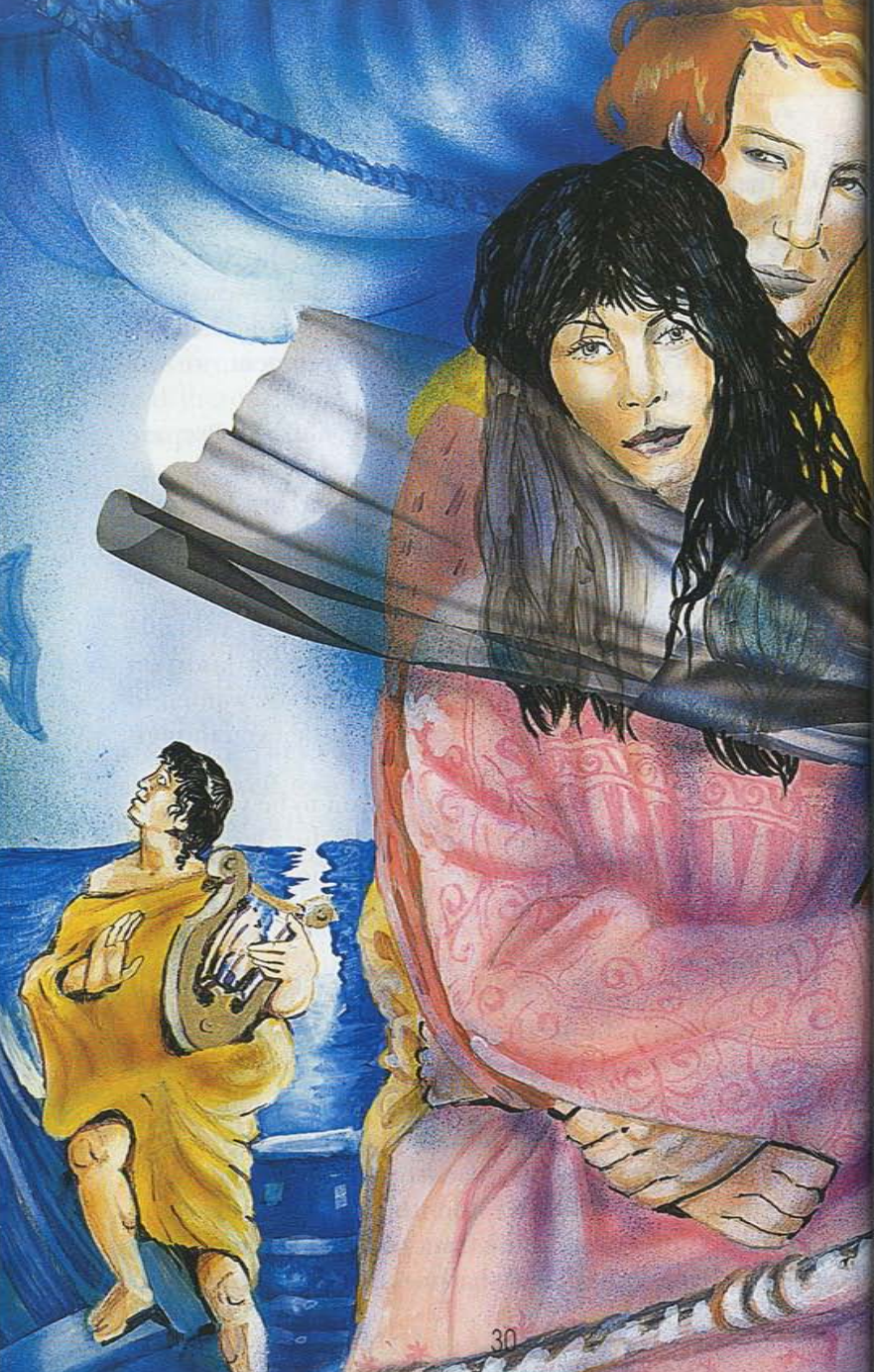
"You are at an age when most young men are considering marriage. Perhaps you should look for a woman to love with all your heart. Then, you will find someone who you will never get tired of playing for."

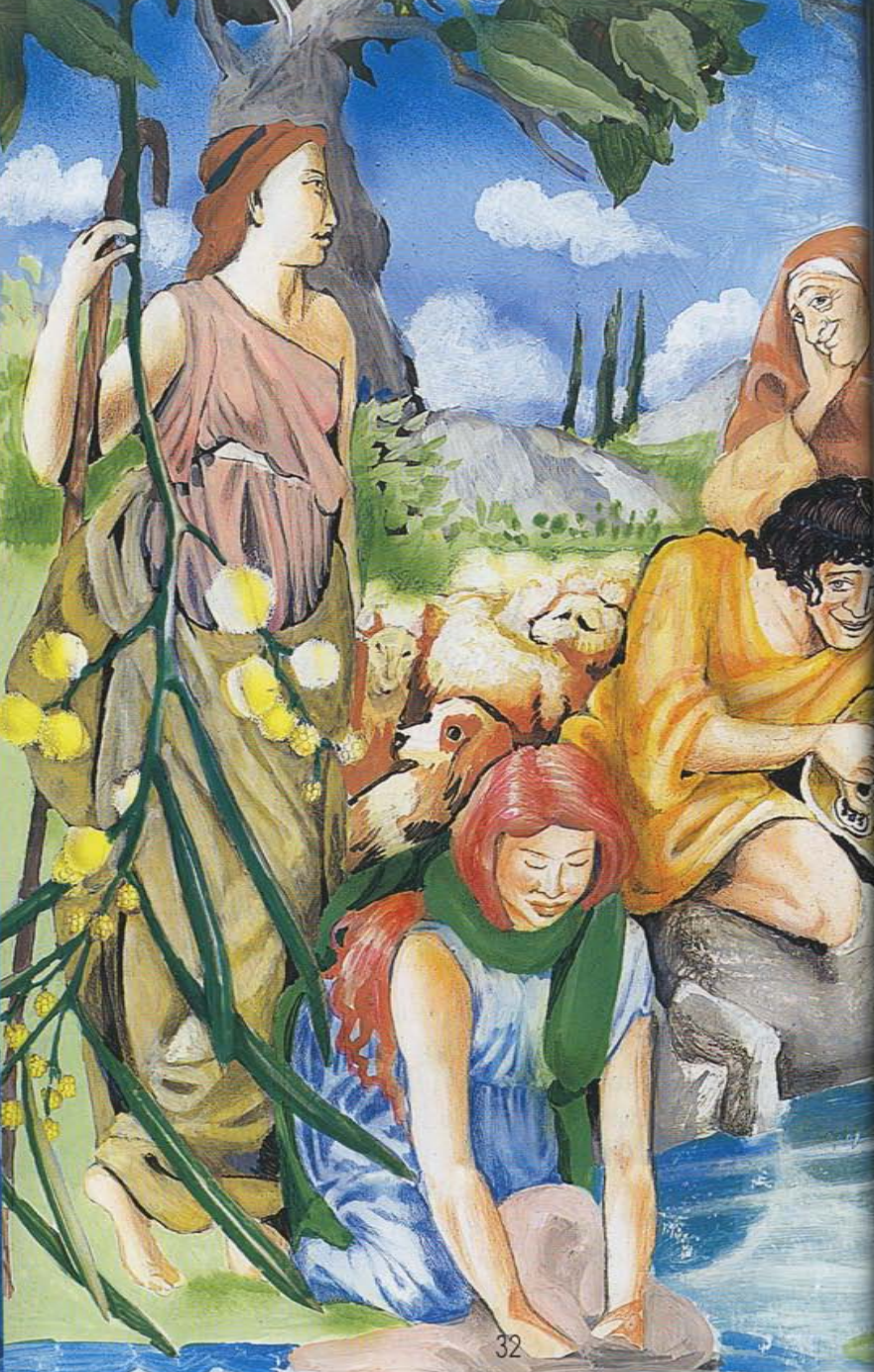


Orpheus thought this over, but he was not interested in any of the women he knew.

Orpheus was used to people stopping whatever they were doing so that they could listen to his songs. However, each time he walked through one particular village, he noticed a woman who would never look up at him. Instead, she would continue washing clothes, picking fruit from the trees or cleaning up outside her home. Orpheus would stop and play even more beautifully so that she could feel the music more deeply, but she wouldn't respond.

Frustrated, Orpheus stopped playing one day as he stood





before her. She also stopped what she was doing.

"Why did you stop playing?"

"Every day that I come here I see you paying no attention, regardless of the song I'm playing."

"The music is inside me. If I stopped moving with it, I feel I would lose it."

Orpheus was surprised at this answer. Slowly, he picked up his lyre and began to play again. This time, he saw that she really did feel every note that he played. The woman's name was Eurydice, and she was the one Orpheus would marry.



Their wedding took place in the mountains, and hundreds of people came to celebrate with them.

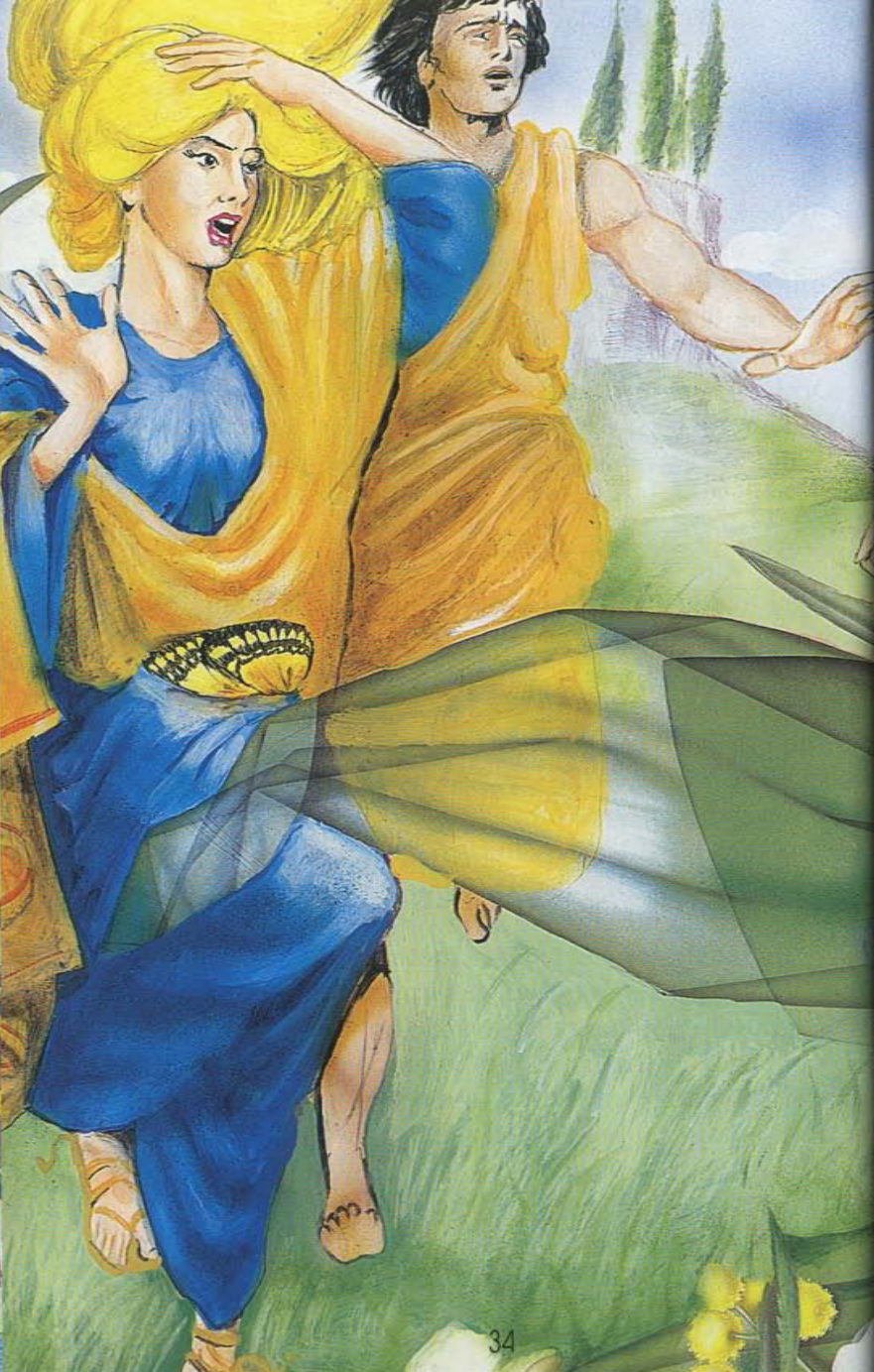
Orpheus picked up his lyre and asked Eurydice to listen closely as he played.

"Only through you does my music show its true joy. I love watching you move to the way I play."

"I never had to force myself to move to the rhythm of your singing, but do not try to keep me always in your sight. Today, of all days, I feel that I want to move all over this land and be moved as the land moves. So play, my love, and know that I am listening even if you cannot see me."

And this is what happened. As Orpheus played, Eurydice moved down the mountainside and through the trees. She felt the earth moving as she turned round in circles with her hands held out at her sides. Three of her bridesmaids were with her — two holding the ends of her white dress and one showering her with flowers.

They came to a clearing where the grass seemed to be moving in waves to the distant sounds of Orpheus's lyre. Eurydice wanted to feel this movement, so she took off her



shoes. Even the grass felt the music and its cool softness told her feet when Orpheus's finger changed strings and when he sang of love.

But there was something that was not listening to all of this. A small brown viper snake with five yellow spots on its head was lying in the grass, completely unmoved by the music. When Eurydice's bare foot stepped on it, she felt its poisonous teeth sink into her flesh like needles. Slowly, she fell to the ground.

"Orpheus, help me! Please, my love, help me!"

Her cries did not carry far, for she was losing her breath. Her bridesmaids came to her aid, but it was too late. The life in her eyes was leaving her. She could only whisper,

"Orpheus my love, it's all too soon..."



THE Underworld

Even though he couldn't see her, Orpheus felt that something terrible had happened to Eurydice. He suddenly stopped playing, stood up and began making his way through the people and down the mountainside. Everyone was surprised that he had stopped playing so suddenly, but the celebration was too important for them to think much of it.

When Orpheus saw one of the young bridesmaids running towards him, crying, he began to run to the place where Eurydice lay. He held her body in his arms and he cried out to the sky.

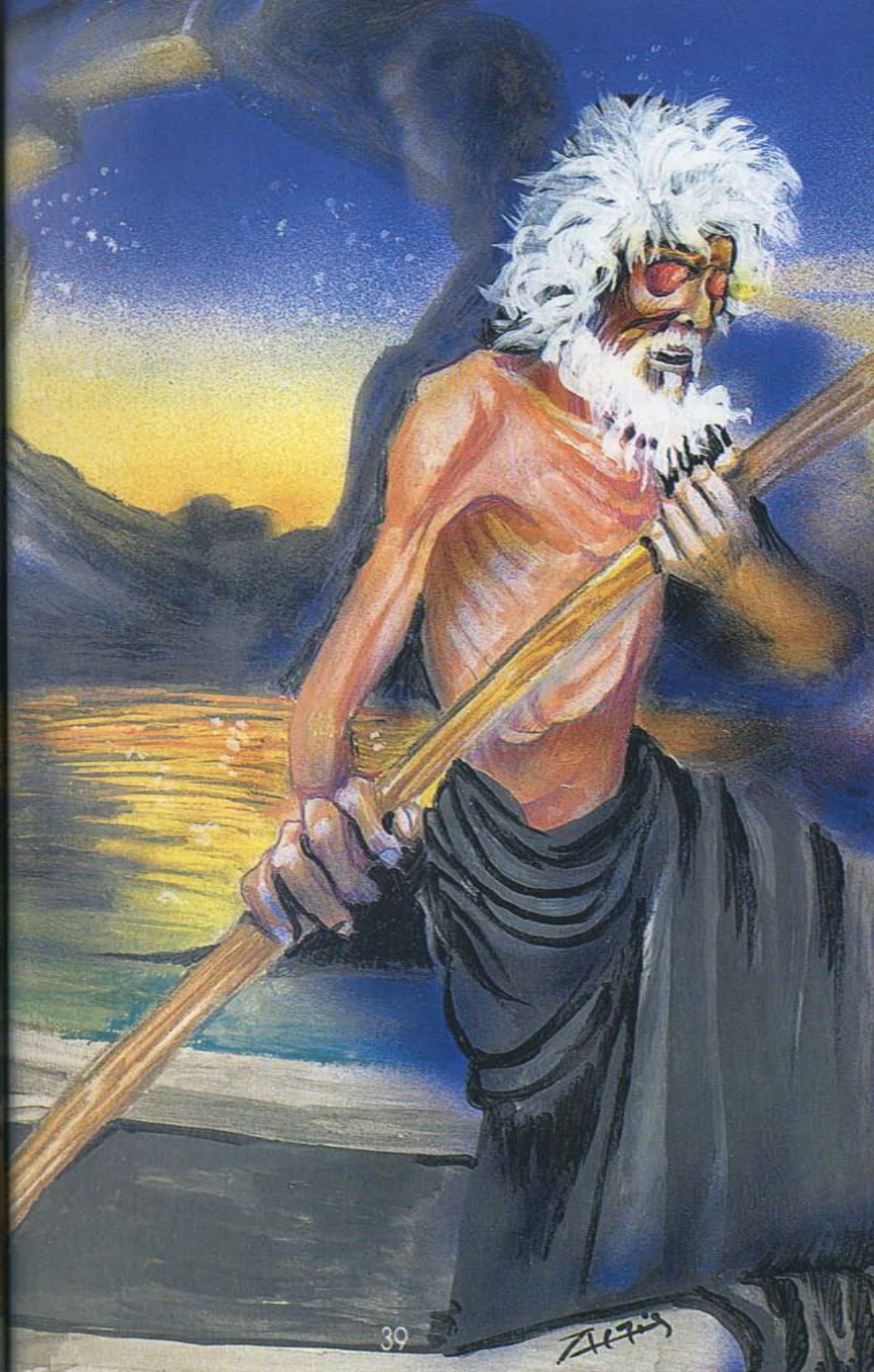
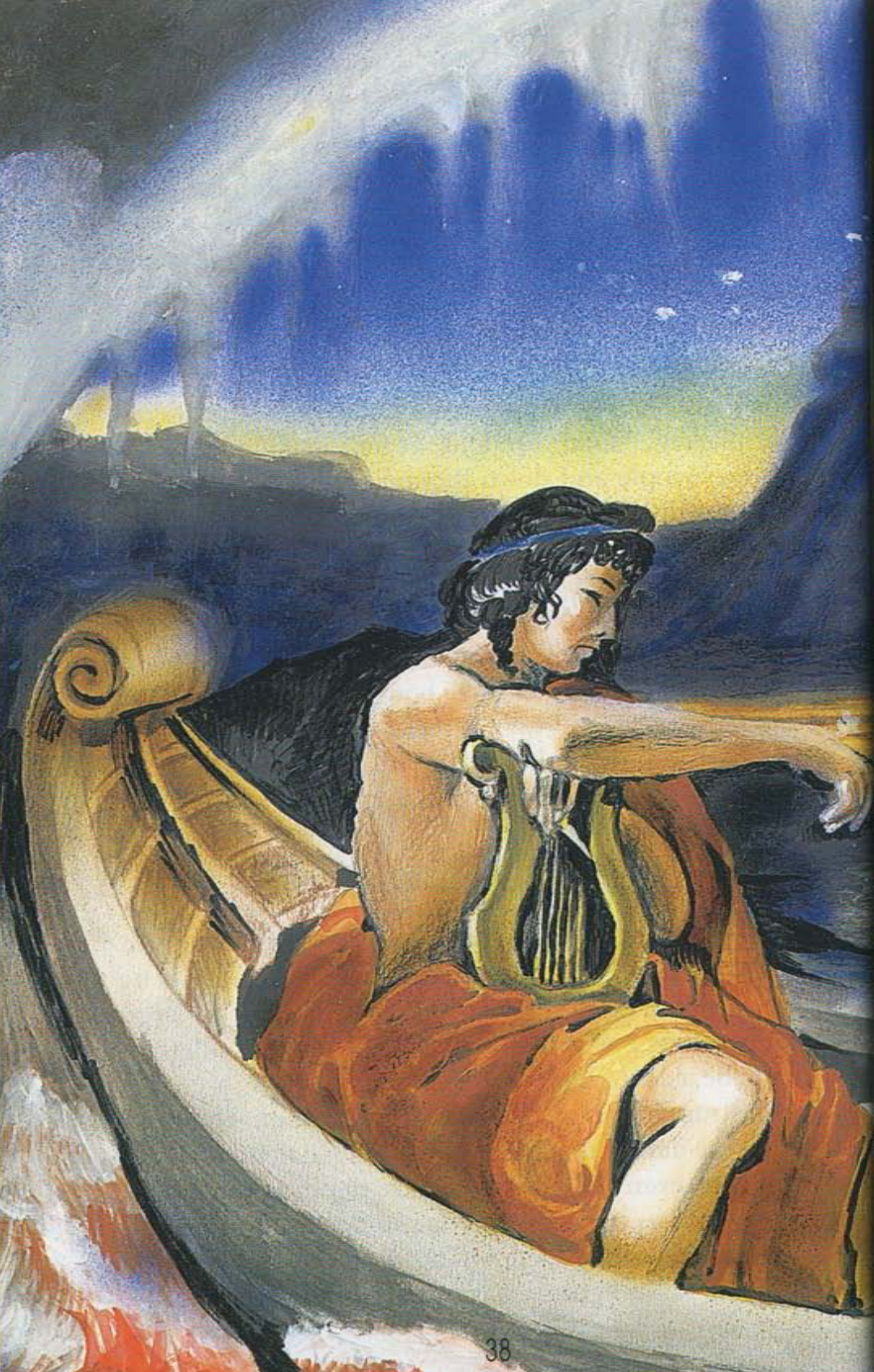
"Why have you done this to me? It's not fair! I refuse to accept this. I will fight everyone and everything to bring her back to life. I know I can!"



Eurydice was taken to the underworld where all of the dead were ruled over by Pluton and Persephone. Orpheus knew of an entrance to this place, deep between two large cliffs. The opening was so narrow that he had to turn sideways in order to be able to climb down below.

The entrance was dark, and the further Orpheus descended the darker it got, until he could see nothing at all. He could not even see where he was stepping, but it no longer mattered as he wasn't moving under his own power. He was being moved by some unknown force.

Finally, he saw a light. It was coming from deep inside a



cave. When Orpheus looked inside, he saw that he was standing in front of a river with fire burning on its surface. There was an old man there with wild white hair, standing next to a boat. He was looking down at the water, and Orpheus thought he saw the reflection of the fire in the man's eyes, but when the man turned to look at him Orpheus saw that his eyes were made of fire. Finally, he had met Charon the Ferryman.

"No money was put upon your lips on the day you were buried, so I will not take you across the River Styx."

"But I did not die. I only came here to talk to Pluton and Persephone. I want to ..."

"Stop talking! I don't want to hear you if you do not have any money for the passage."

Orpheus realised that Charon understood nothing but money. He had no choice but to play his lyre and see if the magic of his music could also work here in the underworld. He sang of how relatives of the dead placed coins on the dead's lips, so that the kind and good Charon would take them safely across the River Styx. It was an honourable job that Charon had as he really made sure the dead would rest in peace.

When Orpheus finished playing, Charon got into his boat and began to push it out into the water. Orpheus quickly got in behind him, and Charon spoke to the fire and water as he rowed.

"Do not harm us great River Styx. We only wish to get to the other side. We are not carrying the dead, but we respect your power and place."

With those words, a path in the water opened up before them and the flames on either side of them lowered. When they got to the other side, Charon spoke first;

"This is as far as I shall take you. I will be here when it is time to take you back."

"How will you know when that is?"

Charon did not answer him. Instead, he began to row back across the water, speaking to it, but what he said Orpheus could not hear.



PLUTON'S Judgement

On the other side of the River Styx, there was a gate across the path which led further down into the underworld. In front of the gate was Cerberus, a three-headed dog with a tail like a dragon's. Orpheus hid when he saw this, and his heart beat quickly with fear. He had to remind himself of his original idea.

"You came here believing your lyre would guide you safely to Eurydice. If you forget that, you will never see her again."

Orpheus emerged from his hiding place behind the rock and began to play. Cerberus ran at him, ready to tear him to pieces, but Orpheus simply closed his eyes and sang the highest note that would come to his throat. The dog stopped before him, captured by the sound of Orpheus's voice. His ears were standing straight up, and he forgot about attacking Orpheus. He went back and lay down next to the gate. His eyes became heavy and he felt sleepy, and as Orpheus walked past him, still playing, Cerberus dozed off.

Orpheus continued playing his lyre as he walked through the underworld, because he was never certain whether what he saw would be a danger to him or not. And he saw a lot. He saw Sisyphus constantly pushing a rock up a hill only to have it fall back again. He saw Tantalus standing in a lake of water, dying of thirst, but every time he reached down to drink the water, it disappeared. And he saw Ixion, punished for speaking against Hera and tied to a wheel which turned

forever. Yet, all of these men were able to forget their troubles when they heard Orpheus's lyre.



Pluton and Persephone lived in a palace surrounded by gates leading to fields of dead flowers and swamps of a black, sticky substance. The dead were wandering in these fields crying for things they had lost and could not find. They, too, felt joy at the sound of Orpheus's playing, and they all stopped and watched him as he made his way to the palace entrance.

Pluton and Persephone had been told that someone who was still living had entered the underworld. No one before or after Orpheus ever did this, so this was an exceptional moment.

Pluton stood next to his queen, Persephone, wearing his magical black helmet. Orpheus stopped playing when he saw them.

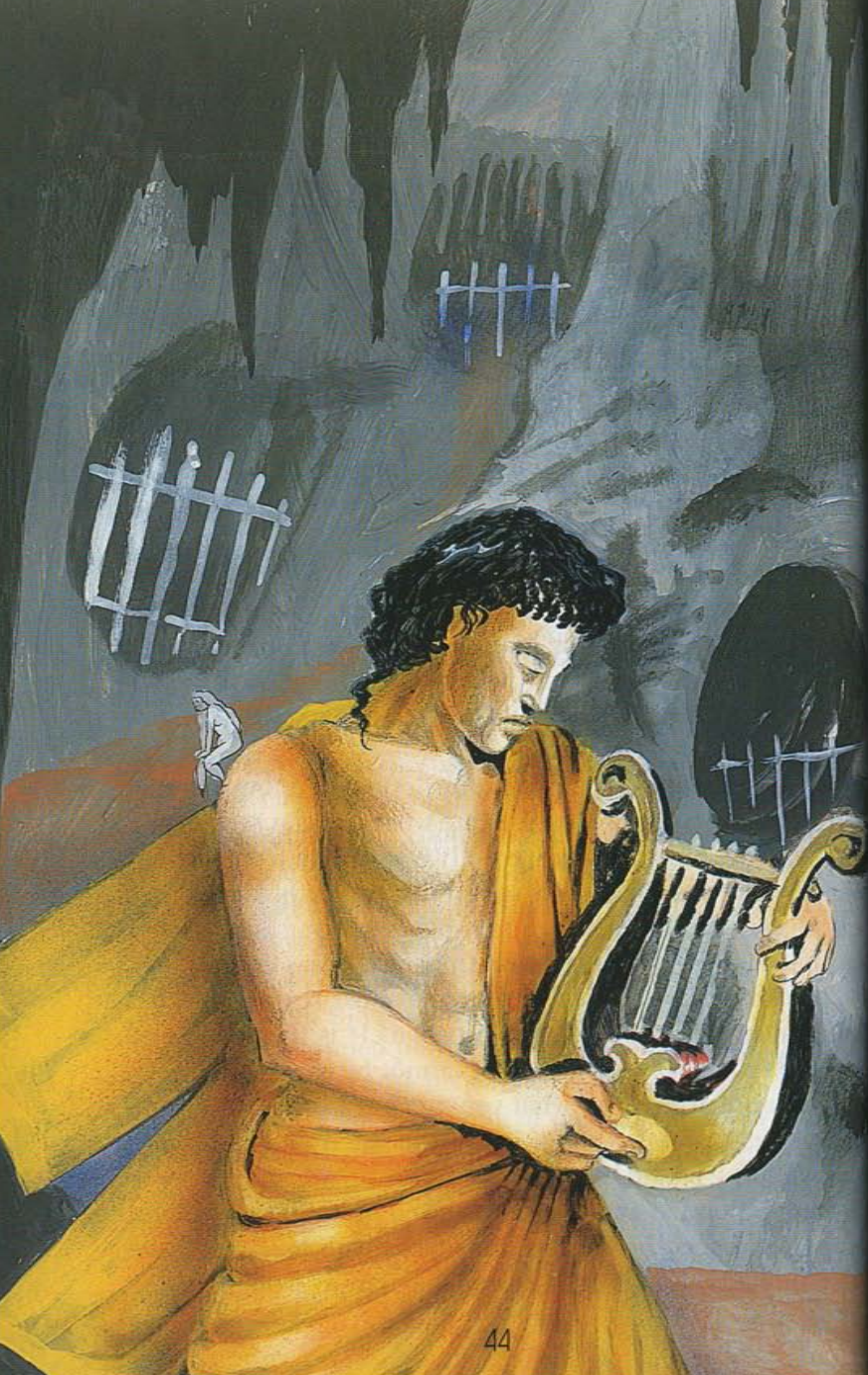
"The gods must look favourably upon you if they have let you enter the underworld. Tell me what it is you seek here."

"My wife, Eurydice, has recently been taken from me and she is now somewhere with you in this powerful kingdom. I fear that she has been taken too soon; that our life together was never given a chance to begin before it was ended."

"But there is no one here, as you must realise, that has been taken from your world too soon. It is their fate, and someone's fate is something that cannot be changed."

"I cannot argue with what you say, but I can only tell you what I feel through a song. If you will listen to me, perhaps you will understand me better."

Pluton nodded and Orpheus picked up his lyre. Orpheus sang of the need he felt to fill his heart with love, and how, once he had found it, it had been taken away from him.



When Pluton had taken Persephone to be queen of the underworld, the entire earth cried and its tears turned to ice, freezing the flowers and the trees. So Orpheus sang how he felt about losing Eurydice comparing his pain to that of the earth. He asked Pluton to let him have Eurydice back for just a little longer and then she and he would be theirs again forever.

Persephone was so moved by his song and its reminder of how she, too, had been taken from the earth and brought to the underworld too soon that she spoke first:

"Of course we will let you see your beautiful wife again. The gods must have sent you here as a gift, for your music is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard."

Pluton agreed with what his wife said, but he knew he could not allow anyone to go back to the upperworld so easily.

"Persephone is right. Your song has won you what no other living person has been given before. However, you must be patient still. Leave us and return to the upperworld. Eurydice will be behind you the entire way, but do not look back. Trust that this gift is being given to you because of the song you sang. If you look back to see if your wife is there before you get to the upperworld, you will lose her and she will again be ours, only this time, forever."

Orpheus obeyed Pluton. He turned away from them and began his long journey back to the upperworld, filled with the hope that Eurydice would once again be his.

ORPHEUS *Among the Stars*

Cerberus was still sleeping when Orpheus reached the gate to the underworld, and Charon was waiting with his boat at the River Styx.

As Orpheus walked, he never once looked back, but he did feel that Eurydice was right behind him. When he got into Charon's boat, he sat forward so she would have the space to sit behind him. She was so close he thought he could feel her breath upon him. His heart beat wildly with the desire to turn around and take her in his arms, but he waited.

He calmed himself with thoughts of what life would be like when they were together again. In his mind, he saw her in the forest the day she had stepped on the viper. Only this time, there was no viper. There was only him holding her in his arms, and he imagined her talking about their life together.

"I'd like to have a house in the hills so our children can run free and see all the beauty nature has to offer us."

"Wherever we are, I know we'll be happy. I'm happy right here listening to the wind blow through the trees."

Orpheus was brought out of his fantasy as Charon's boat reached the far shore. He left the boat and began the long climb up the tunnel of darkness leading to the upperworld, and not once did he think that Eurydice was not behind him. In fact, the further he went, the more he felt Eurydice was going to reach out and touch him. The excitement was so great that he had to do everything he could to keep on climbing and not turn around.



Orpheus saw the light coming from the opening between the two large cliffs, and he climbed quickly to the top, feeling the warm sun of the upperworld touch his skin once again. He wasn't sure if it was his imagination or not, but he thought he heard Eurydice slip and nearly fall. He turned and reached his hands out to grab her. He saw her there in the darkness, not yet out of the underworld, and they both knew he had turned too soon. She was pulled back into the underworld and all Orpheus could hear was Eurydice's voice saying, "Farewell."

Orpheus tried to descend through the opening again, but his foot came against rock. The opening had been closed. He knew he would not be given another chance to descend into the underworld. He banged his fists on the side of the cliff and looked up at the sky, crying out to the gods.

"Why have you done this to me? You gave me hope and now you have decided to let me live my life in sorrow. Why?"

But there were no answers to the questions he was asking.

Orpheus lived the rest of his life walking alone and playing his lyre through the hills and forests of Thrace. He never again played songs of happiness; he only played songs which came from the sadness of his heart, but still the music was filled with beauty.



After his death, Apollo and the Muses asked the other gods to place Orpheus and his lyre in the sky among the stars to remind people where the true spirit of music comes from. On clear nights, he can still be seen among the stars playing his lyre, and sometimes when there is no wind blowing and no breeze to disturb the still of the night, he can be heard singing about people's happiness and misfortunes, reminding the whole universe of the way life was, is and always shall be.



Word List



Chapter 1

arrival (n)
art (n)
blow-blew-blown (v)
bundle (n)
cloth (n)
combine (v)
come through (n)
create (v)
define (v)
despair (n)
epic (adj)
everlasting (adj)
experience (v)
fill (v)
forehead (n)
forest (n)
from that day forward (exp)
give birth to (phr)
hardly (adv)
have influence over (phr)
high-backed (adj)
highlight (n)

hold a celebration (phr)
hold-held-held (v)
hold sb/sth spellbound (exp)
human (n)
in honour of (exp)
instrument (n)
lay-laid-laid (v)
lead on (phr v)
loss (n)
lyre (n)
match (v)
midday (n)
movement (n)
Muse (n)
musical (adj)
nature (n)
newborn (adj)
open area (phr)
pass through (v)
place (v)
rhythm (n)
science (n)
silk (n)
sorrow (n)

take place (idm)
violet-coloured (adj)
wreath (n)

Chapter 2

accept (v)
adventure (n)
advice (n)
amazed (pp)
base on (v)
be of help to sb (exp)
breathe (v)
calm (adj)
centaur (n)
certain (adj)
challenge (v)
chest (n)
creative (adj)
creature (n)
destruction (n)
do magic (phr v)
dressed (pp)
enthusiasm (n)
experience (n)
heroic (adj)

it seems time for me (exp)
lie-lay-lain (v)
missing (pres p)
musician (n)
natural (adj)
necessary (adj)
no doubt (idm)
openness (n)
opportunity (n)
part (n)
patient (adj)
peaceful (adj)
restless (adj)
rise-rose-risen (v)
serious (adj)
settle a quarrel (exp)
slightly (adv)
steady course (phr)
step closer (phr)
The Golden Fleece (n)
voyage (n)

Chapter 3

amazement (n)
arm (n)
awaken (v)
boxer (n)
brave (adj)
bravery (n)
brightness (n)
casual (adj)
challenger (n)
cheering (n)
chest (n)
coat (n)

compete (v)
competitor (n)
contest (n)
crossed (pp)
delicate (adj)
ensure (v)
flying (adj)
give compliments (phr)
ground (n)
in amazement (exp)
in direct contrast to (exp)
inspiration (n)
intelligence (n)
knock out (phr v)
knock sb over (phr v)
land (n)
little man (n)
look up (phr v)
muscle (n)
oar (n)
out of the way (exp)
pick up (phr v)
praise (n)
produce (v)
provide (v)
ram (n)
reason (n)
rest (v)
restore (v)
roar (n)
series (n)
set (v)
shoulder (n)
side (n)
spirit (n)
the hardest of hearts (phr)

throne (n)
touch sb's heart (exp)
train (v)
turn sth over to sb (phr v)
turn to (v)
win sb's heart (exp)

Chapter 4

be carried away (phr v)
boxing (n)
break out (phr v)
break the rhythm (exp)
by the neck (phr)
cause (v)
crew (n)
cut to pieces (exp)
demand (v)
distinguish (v)
drift (v)
drown out (v)
entire (adj)
fascinated (pp)
float into (v)
fog (n)
former (adj)
fortunately (adv)
get close to (phr)
give sb a break (exp)
grab (v)
hypnotized (pp)
in any case (idm)
in particular (idm)
insist (v)
instantly (adv)
in tune with (idm)

lead sb away from sth (v)
 let out (phr v)
 look-out (n)
 lose my course (exp)
 mask (n)
 moved (pp)
 notice (v)
 occasionally (adv)
 on board (idm)
 on deck (exp)
 off my course (exp)
 passionately (adv)
 prove (v)
 push on (phr v)
 roll (v)
 rough (adj)
 rowing (n)
 sailing (n)
 separate (v)
 sharp (adj)
 sunlight (n)
 surrounded (pp)
 sweetness (n)
 sword (n)
 take my turn (exp)
 the setting sun (n)
 unable (to do sth) (adj)
 valuable (adj)
 whisper (n)
 wrestle (v)
 you can't punch your way out of it (phr)

Chapter 5

accomplish (v)

anger (v)
 army (n)
 arrow (n)
 attack (v)
 bathe (v)
 bow (n)
 dragon (n)
 dragon-toothed (adj)
 enemy (n)
 fail (v)
 fall in love with sb (idm)
 fight sb/sth off (phr v)
 fire-breathing (adj)
 flap (v)
 gladly (adv)
 grow out of (v)
 guide (v)
 handsome (adj)
 heir to the throne (exp)
 hold sth out to sb (v)
 honour (v)
 in comfort (exp)
 in peace (phr)
 in the form of sth (idm)
 instantly (adv)
 oracle (n)
 perform a service (exp)
 plant (v)
 plough (n)
 reach (v)
 request (n)
 rest (v)
 rightful (adj)
 scene (n)
 search (for) (n)
 shoot (shot-shot) (v)
 special (adj)

succeed in (v)
 survive (v)
 treat sb as/like sth (v)
 wish (v)

Chapter 6

all that they had been through (exp)
 attach (v)
 battle (n)
 be forced (v)
 be gone with you (exp)
 beat (v)
 beyond (prep)
 by myself (idm)
 capture (v)
 clearing (n)
 defeat (v)
 discuss (v)
 do sb harm (exp)
 doubt (v)
 equal (v)
 escape from (v)
 even though (idm)
 feel drawn to sb (exp)
 final (adj)
 full moon (adj)
 furious (adj)
 get the chance (phr)
 go against sb (phr v)
 gradually (adv)
 grow in number (phr)
 guard (n)
 honour the agreement (exp)
 hood (n)

in case (idm)
 kingdom (n)
 neither ... nor (conj)
 nephew (n)
 ointment (n)
 possession (n)
 protect from (v)
 reply (v)
 rub (v)
 save (v)
 shake (v)
 spare (sb) (v)
 spear (n)
 spread (v)
 treasure (n)

Chapter 7

bare foot (n)
 bridesmaid (n)
 carry far (phr)
 celebrate (v)
 come to sb's aid (exp)
 consider (v)
 distant (adj)
 frustrated (adj)
 hearty (adj)
 in waves (exp)
 keep sb always in my sight (exp)
 listen closely (exp)
 lose interest in sth (exp)
 needle (n)
 pick fruit (phr)
 poisonous (adj)

prevent (from) (v)
 regardless of (prep)
 respond (v)
 retell (v)
 sense (n)
 shower sb with flowers (exp)
 sink sth into sth (phr v)
 string (n)
 take off (phr v)
 take place (idm)
 turn round in circles (exp)
 unmoved (adj)
 viper snake (n)
 whisper (v)

Chapter 8

bury (v)
 cliff (n)
 coin (n)
 cry out (v)
 descend (v)
 entrance (n)
 Ferryman (n)
 flame (n)
 force (n)
 harm (v)
 hold sb/sth in my arms (exp)
 honourable (adj)
 It's not fair! (exp)
 lower (v)
 make my way (idm)
 matter (v)
 narrow (adj)

opening (n)
 passage (n)
 path (n)
 place (v)
 reflection (n)
 respect (v)
 rest in peace (idm)
 rule over (v)
 step (v)
 surface (n)
 the underworld (n)
 turn sideways (phr)

Chapter 9

allow (v)
 argue (v)
 beat (v)
 Cerberus (n)
 compare (v)
 constantly (adv)
 doze off (phr v)
 emerge from (v)
 enter (v)
 entire (adj)
 exceptional (adj)
 fate (n)
 freeze (v)
 gate (n)
 guide (v)
 helmet (n)
 hiding place (n)
 kingdom (n)
 look favourably upon (phr v)
 nod (v)
 obey (v)
 original (adj)

realise (v)
 reminder (n)
 seek (v)
 sticky (adj)
 straight up (adv)
 swamp (n)
 tail (n)
 tear (n)
 tear sb/sth to pieces
 (exp)
 the underworld (n)
 three-headed (adj)
 throat (n)
 tied (pp)
 trust (v)

turn away from (v)
 turn to (v)
 wonder (v)
 wheel (n)
 whether (conj)

Chapter 10

bang my fists on sth
 (phr)
 breeze (n)
 disturb (v)
 fantasy (n)
 far shore (phr)
 farewell (exp)

grab (v)
 in sorrow (phr)
 keep on (phr v)
 misfortune (n)
 nearly (adv)
 pull sb back (v)
 sit forward (v)
 skin (n)
 slip (v)
 space (n)
 the still of the night
 (exp)
 tunnel (n)
 universe (n)
 wildly (adv)